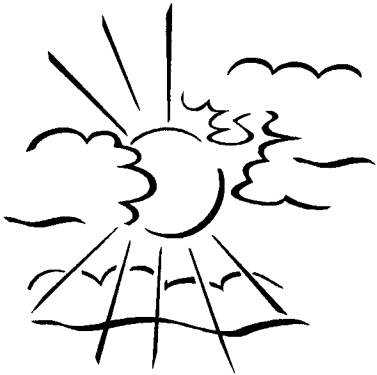


***Department
of
Human
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Articles in Today's Clips

Friday, June 24, 2005

(Be sure to maximize your screen to read your clips)

TOPIC	PAGE
*Budget	2-5
Health Care	6-7
*Child Abuse/Neglect	8-14
Juvenile Justice	15
Homelessness	16
Employment	17
Housing	18-20
Healthy Marriage	21-22
Mental Health	23-24
Charities	25-26
Legal Aid	27
Illegal Residents	28
State Government	29-30

Groups opposing cuts: Budget causing Lansing stampede

Marquette Mining Journal
June 23, 2005

LANSING (AP) - Close prisons. Ban young adults from getting state-paid health care coverage. End welfare payments after four years.

The list of budget proposals that could affect Michigan residents' lives is a long one, and it has drawn scores of people to the state capital in recent weeks to argue against them.

Jessica Ewing, a college student from Mason, had Medicaid coverage but is unable to get it now that she has turned 19 because of an enrollment freeze on healthy 19- and 20-year-olds. A House Republican budget proposal would end the program for that age group.

Ewing got choked up this week as she spoke at a news conference criticizing the proposed changes.

"I am paying my way through college, and I won't be able to afford it" if she runs into expensive medical bills and is forced to quit school, she said. The House Republican proposal for the budget year that starts Oct. 1 would end Medicaid coverage to about 13,000 more low-income single 19- and 20-year-olds and 30,000 people who get their benefits because they take care of a low-income child on Medicaid. It would also cut off welfare benefits Jan. 1 to recipients who have been receiving aid for four years or more.

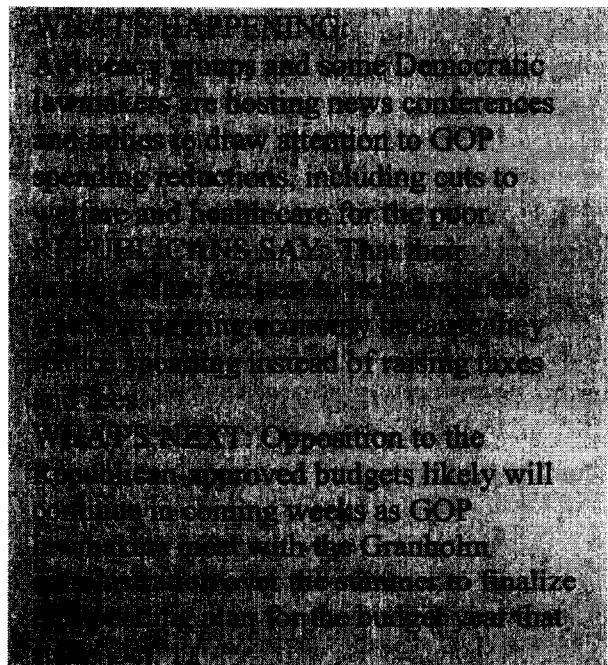
Opponents of the proposal, including Democratic Gov. Jennifer Granholm, say the changes will leave more people without any insurance, making them more likely to wait for treatment and then only get it at expensive emergency rooms.

With more uninsured patients, hospitals will look elsewhere for revenue, which could mean higher health care premiums for those with coverage.

The Republican majority in the Senate took a different approach to the Medicaid program, choosing to save money by capping enrollment in programs that offer benefits to 19- and 20-year-olds and relatives who are taking care of a low-income child on Medicaid. Some of the state's 1.4 million Medicaid patients would pay an average \$60 in annual premiums along with higher copays for brand-name drugs.

Granholm agrees with capping enrollment for young adults and limiting benefits for young adults and people taking care of a child on Medicaid. But she opposes many of the other GOP proposals.

Advocacy groups argue that the proposed reductions will hurt the state's already struggling economy and prevent poor residents from receiving necessary health care and having the resources to move out of poverty.



Republican legislative leaders, however, say the state needs to balance its budget for the upcoming fiscal year by spending less money rather than increasing taxes and fees. Although the Senate didn't make major policy changes to the welfare program for the next budget year, the House voted to cut off welfare payments on Jan. 1 if someone has been receiving assistance for more than four years.

State Department of Human Services director Marianne Udow spent the week meeting in Grand Rapids, Lansing, Flint and Macomb County with welfare recipients who would be affected by the proposal. Two women worried about losing their assistance broke down in tears during the Flint meeting, she said.

"These people are facing losing their children to foster care or an institution," Udow said. "This is a population of people who are taking care of the disabled. They are functionally illiterate. ... I think it's the moral thing to do to help the less fortunate."

Rep. Jerry Kooiman is a Grand Rapids Republican who pushed for the welfare reform in the \$39.7 billion budget approved by the House earlier this month. He said the proposal sets a time limit for welfare while allowing recipients to take home more of their earnings.

"Without limits and without creating incentives for earning money while still on welfare, we will never move people from welfare to self-sufficiency," Kooiman said. "I'm a compassionate person, but I don't believe keeping people in poverty is very compassionate."

Several other budget cuts have also come under fire this week, including proposals to eliminate funding for two Upper Peninsula correctional facilities.

While Granholm has proposed ending a contract with a private company running a youth correctional facility in Lake County, GOP legislative leaders instead want to close the Newberry Correctional Facility and Camp Manistique.

Dozens of Upper Peninsula residents upset that the House and Senate budgets would eliminate funding for the facilities held a rally on Tuesday at the Capitol to protest the cuts. Many wore yellow shirts that said, "Can you hear us now?!"

Ken Jewell has been a corrections officer at the Newberry prison for four years and said he likely would be eligible to keep his job by transferring to another prison in Michigan. But he and his wife, Susan, don't want to leave the Upper Peninsula.

"We really love Newberry. I was born and raised there, and I want my daughter to be raised there," Susan Jewell, 26, said about her four-month-old daughter who also made the trip to Lansing. "I can't imagine taking her away from her grandparents. I don't suppose that's what the Legislature really cares about, but it's very important to us as a family."

Republican House Speaker Craig DeRoche of Novi said he is open to cutting the overall appropriation to the Department of Corrections instead of closing the prison in Luce County and the camp in Schoolcraft County.

"I think that it will work out," he said. "What would be the best public policy for the state of Michigan would be to find efficiencies throughout the state rather than sacrifice bed space."

Corrections Department Director Patricia Caruso said an across-the-board cut will devastate the prison system that is already stretched. She said it is more efficient to close the private juvenile prison in Lake County as Granholm has suggested.

Events organized to oppose the proposed spending cuts likely will continue in the coming weeks as Republican lawmakers begin budget negotiations with the Granholm administration over the summer. A final spending plan for the new budget year is not expected to be completed until August or September.

Michigan Report
June 23, 2005

SENATE PASSES ZERO BUDGET BACK TO HOUSE

From some \$30 billion to nothing, just like that, and the 2005-06 budget process continues to move in its own fashion. The Senate on Thursday passed a stripped out version of the House's omnibus budget bill, HB 4831, and returned it to that chamber.

The bill is expected to go into a joint House/Senate conference committee as lawmakers prepare to negotiate over the summer with Governor Jennifer Granholm on the 2005-06 budget.

The controversial 680-page-plus budget that included spending for virtually every budget except K-12 school aid passed the House two weeks ago. Last week, the Senate passed separate bills to cover all the budgets that the House is expected to act on next week.

Without debate Thursday, the Senate discharged HB 4831, stripped it down to a three-page budget appropriating no money and passed in on a 22-14 vote. The vote was straight party line with all Republicans voting for the bill and all Democrats voting against it.

Lansing State Journal
June 24, 2005
Letters to the editor

Don't hurt youth

The House budget for fiscal 2006 cuts programs for what many deem as Michigan's "most vulnerable citizens." People ages 19 and 20 who, under the House budget, will lose their Medicaid benefits may not seem vulnerable, but homeless youth and youth who have aged out of the foster care system will definitely be hurt.

Hundreds of youths in Michigan who are homeless or have exited foster care fall into that age range. These youths are already at higher risk for poverty and unemployment and more likely to have physical/mental health needs that require treatment.

Losing Medicaid coverage puts them at risk of falling into a financial "black hole" where they may stay, hindering their ability to overcome the hurdles already in their path and increasing the probability that they will become a financial burden on our communities.

Do we really want this sort of budget savings?

Lynn Nee
Executive director
Michigan Network for Youth and Families

Ann Arbor News
June 24, 2005
Letters to the editor

Health pledges for Medicaid a good idea

I support state Sen. Tom George's innovative proposal for Medicaid recipients in Michigan. Under his legislation, Medicaid-covered adults (I suggest including teens 12 and older) would be rewarded with lowered Medicaid premiums by signing and following a "personal responsibility agreement," the terms of which include no smoking, regular exercising, keeping scheduled medical appointments and seeing to their children's immunizations.

Sharon Park, at the Michigan League for Human Services, is against the legislation because low-income people can't afford healthier foods and exercise equipment.

"Just because someone receives Medicaid assistance doesn't mean it's appropriate to legislate their behavior," Park stated.

I suggest that healthier foods - not to be confused with health foods, so-called - are in fact less costly than the overly-processed, highly-advertised, convenience foods that are consumed by the vast majority of our citizenry, poor and otherwise.

Secondly, for most people, the best exercise equipment one possesses are their arms, hands, legs and feet. Aided by reasonably priced walking shoes, a regimen of walking a few miles daily, five or six days a week, will do wonders for an individual's and a family's health and fitness.

Finally, I'm sure Park is not unaware that one of the historical predicates in formulating and administering this nation's social welfare policies has been the appropriateness of legislating - impacting - recipient behavior.

That being the case, and with the proposed legislation incentivizing responsible behavior, it's altogether positive for Medicaid customers and the taxpayers, some being recipients, who fund Medicaid.

Stan J. Weber, Ann Arbor

Lansing State Journal

Published June 23, 2005

Thursday's letters to the editor

Medicaid plan hurts

The state Chamber of Commerce calls for cuts in Medicaid. The Republican-led Legislature responds with cuts to Medicaid, and co-pays and premiums for Medicaid clients to promote personal responsibility. This includes children.

Fifty-five percent of the Medicaid population are kids under the age of 18 because their working-poor family makes less than \$375 per week. Yet children only spend 19 percent of the state's Medicaid budget. The federal government currently exempts children from co-pays, but states can ask for a waiver.

If Michigan passes \$5 a month premiums and co-pays on children's Medicaid services, this will likely result in more uninsured kids, less access to health care and more costly emergency room visits.

So much for "not balancing the budget on the backs of the vulnerable and children."

I challenge Michigan's business and political leaders to justify how this proposal is good for the economy.

Michele Strasz
Williamston

STUDENT SAFETY ZONE BILLS HIT SNAG AMONG TESTIMONY

The rush to approve the Student Safety Zone bills hit a snag Thursday after passionate testimony revealed much opposition to a bill stating registered sex offenders could not live, work or loiter within 1,000 feet of a school.

That bill (SB 617) will be discussed at a later date in the Senate Education Committee, which on Thursday approved five bills related to the safety zones and one indirectly related bill.

After an hour of testimony related to SB 617, committee chair Sen. Wayne Kuipers (R-Holland) said the bill and its companion, SB 616, would be re-evaluated and possibly rewritten to address the concerns many people had with it. Even three of the five committee members from both parties expressed dislike of the bill.

Under the bill, a person on the sex offender registry could not live, work or loiter within 1,000 feet of school property, unless they were living there before the bill took effect, were in prison or were under 18 years old. Testifiers and senators took issue with "school property," which can include abandoned buildings and storehouses for school buses, and questioned how exactly the rule would be enforced.

Many of those testifying would not reveal their last names or their locations.

The most passionate testimony came from Barb Lamb, a teacher and mother whose son was evicted and harassed for simply being on the registry, though she said he was not convicted of a crime.

"Now, you're proposing to further restrict where he can live and work," she said. "How far can we keep beating people down before they give up?"

Others agreed with Ms. Lamb and said further persecution of sex offenders is wrong.

"These people have paid their price," said Sen. Burton Leland (D-Detroit). "There comes a point where the punishment doesn't fit the crime."

State resident Linda Zimmerman questioned the speed of the bills and said these laws will affect few of the true predators, since they would probably not obey them anyway.

"This will create many more homeless and jobless," Ms. Zimmerman said, adding that construction workers, utility workers, mail carriers and even landscapers could be affected by the bill.

Mr. Kuipers asked the crowd if they would support a similar bill that restricts those who cannot live/work/loiter within a school zone to just convicted pedophiles and not everybody on the list. The crowd said that would be acceptable.

The committee then approved the six other bills and sent them to the Senate floor with immediate effect. The first of these, SB 247, would include special education personnel in requirements for state and FBI background checks and require a school to notify anyone with a felony conviction or misdemeanor conviction involving sexual or physical abuse.

Sen. Jason Allen (R-Traverse City) sponsored the bill after a family in his district learned their mentally ill daughter had been sexually abused by a special education teacher in the woods. The teacher had been convicted of sex crimes in Alaska but the Michigan background check did not reveal that, Mr. Allen said.

The other bills approved were all part of the Student Safety Zone initiative, and all passed on party line votes except SB 601. Under that bill, a school would be required to run background checks on every employee who is not a teacher, including future applicants. Anyone listed on the sex offender registry would be fired or not allowed to work at the school. If the person were convicted of any other felony, it would be the district's choice of whether or not to hire him or her.

SB 609 and SB 610 were also approved, although some problems were raised with the issue of teacher tenure. Under SB 609, firing or demotion of a tenured teacher could only be done with reasonable and just cause. SB 610 requires the superintendent of public instruction to notify a teacher that his or her certificate could be suspended if found guilty of any felonies or misdemeanors involving children.

Also under SB 610, a teacher found guilty of one of the listed crimes could not receive a paycheck during the administrative proceedings, and would have to forfeit money back to the district if the teaching certificate is revoked. However, after the sentence is completed, the teacher may request a hearing to reinstate the certificate at the superintendent's permission.

Finally, the committee approved SB 611, which would require any teacher charged with a crime to report it to the district and to tell the court he or she was working as a teacher. Failing to do so would be a felony punishable by up to two years in prison and a fine of \$2,000 if the crime was a sexual offense. Failure to report non-sexual crimes would be a misdemeanor punishable by one year in jail and/or \$1,000 in fines.

Bits Of The Sex Offender Bill Move Forward

The most controversial piece of a package of bills to get sex offenders out of classrooms and away from children is being reworked.

Senators on the Education Committee unanimously decided to take a closer look at SB 0617 and SB 0616, which are designed to prohibit anyone on the sex offender registration list from living, working or loitering within 1,000 feet of a school, before moving them to the Senate floor.

During the two-hour meeting, several mothers testified on behalf of their sons. They each told a different story, but they all carried the same theme: Their sons were on the sex offender list for having consensual sex with minors.

One woman claimed her son had sex with his 15-year-old girlfriend while he was a 17-year-old high school junior.

"This Legislature is expecting the worst out of everyone registered without any regard to who is a threat," said Barb **LAMBOURNE** with Citizens for Second Chances.

Lambourne's son is on the list for doing something (agreeing to have consensual sex with a minor) when he was "young and stupid." That does not make him a sexual predator or pedophile, Lambourne said.

"There is a point where the punishment does not fit the crime," Lambourne said.

Committee Chair Sen. Wayne **KUIPERS** (R-Holland), asked the mothers if they would be more supportive of SB 0617 if it the language was restrictive of sexual predators instead of every person listed on the sex offender registry. The women agreed, stating that because the bill was moving so quickly, sufficient language had not been written.

The committee unanimously agreed to take another look at SB 0616 and SB 0617 before moving the bills to the floor.

SB 0616 is designed to structure sentencing guidelines for those on the sex offender registry living, working or loitering within a school safety zone. The committee will discuss exactly how to define "loiter."

The rest of the bills, SB 0247, SB 0601, SB 0609, SB 0610, SB 0611 and SB 0612 were moved to the Senate floor. The panel's three Republican members all voted yes on the bills. The two Democrats voted yes on some and passed on others.

SB 0601, which requires all education employees to get background checks, was amended to include employees hired before 1995.

Posted: 6-23-2005
Ludington Daily News

Center adding more local help for child victims

By JESSICA VANDERK

It is estimated that 600 of Mason County's 7,500 children will be investigated by local law enforcement this year as victims in physical or sexual assault cases.

Staff members of the André Bosse Center, a center for abuse prevention and victims' services in Hart, are hoping to bring the center's services to those children. The center hopes to have a local location so children don't have to travel to Hart for services related to abuse and so there is a place that caters to the county's specific needs. Law enforcement and dozens of community leaders from throughout Mason County attended a breakfast this morning, led by Sheriff Laude Hartrum and André Bosse Center coordinators, to learn more about what a child advocacy center does.

"Because it shouldn't hurt to be a child."

Valerie Rabe, executive director of the Hart center, said a child advocacy center is a net under the existing welfare system for children, which includes services from the Department of Human Services, formerly the Family Independence Agency.

"A children's advocacy center can't make all the hurt go away, but we can make it better," she said, explaining that after a child discloses abuse, he or she may go through repetitive interviews with about 14 people, traveling from sheriff's office to doctor's office. At a center, a child can have all the services in one place.

"It's designed to be a very fun place where bubbles are blown," Rabe added about the room where children are given medical exams at the center. "It's a warm, welcoming place for children; everything is done with children as the focus."

Part of that process is a forensic interview, during which a child will disclose the abuse situation. Conducting those interviews for Mason County now, through the André Bosse Center, is Cynthia Cole. In her position, she was trained by the state and was employed in child protective services for the FIA previously.

"It's hard to hear what was done to children," she said of her job. "Once a child has been molested, they're not a child anymore; they've lost their childhood."

Cole said she can't help but want to comfort the children she speaks to, though she can't because it could negatively affect the interview process.

"Once they disclose, they can heal," she said. "I think the reason kids talk to me so freely is because I'm a grandma. My biggest job is to make them feel comfortable."

Cole must first assure a child is competent and that each understands what they're telling her. Then she asks them to explain the situation, whether it takes 10 minutes or two hours.

"It's not a rushed interview," she said. "There are no leading questions and there's no pressure on the child."

Law enforcement officers are involved in the process when a child discloses abuse, but Cole said it's more comfortable to be in a room that's like a home, not a place like a police department or sheriff's office.

She said having a center for such services in Mason County will help most with the timeliness of the interviews.

"This is their community," she said. "When you take them out of the community, it's kind of scary because they're going somewhere they don't know."

In a month's time, Rabe said the center hopes to have a temporary office in Mason County and will look for, ideally, a ranch-style, freestanding home where a center can be located.

"It's very welcoming to children," she said of a home atmosphere. "By Jan. 1 we want to move forward with the actual facility."

But in order to do that, she said, the center needs help. Along with office space, she and center Development Coordinator Paul Anders discussed other needs with the community leaders and advocates present today. Healthcare professionals are needed to receive special training, committee members are needed, financial contributions are needed.

On a donation form, prepared by the center, it says it costs \$50 a month for one child's therapy and \$200 a month to provide full services to one child.

"We have a lot of needs as we go forward with this," Anders said.

And Hartrum said the center itself is needed.

"Our stats are higher than in other surrounding counties," he said of child abuse. "And we've never figured out why. These things happen. They happen in Mason County."

He pointed out how such cases can tear families apart; he said he spent much of his time in the '80s and '90s fighting against child abuse in the sheriff's office.

"We would be sitting in the sheriff's office, waiting for an appointment, and we'd see the mom or grandma or whoever the caregiver was bringing the child in," he said. "And we'd say, you know, it's 1:00 now and at 1:30, those lives will be changed forever."

Leaders this morning viewed a video by Collin Raye called "The Eleventh Commandment," which Rabe said is "honor thy children." While it played, "Promises, Promises — A Child's View of Incest" was read by Mary Lynn. The child's view was written to Dear Abby by a 12-year-old girl who was abused by her father. In it, she criticizes the way children who disclosed abuse were handled before advocacy centers and more sensitive treatment.

"I asked you for privacy," it says, "and you sent two policeman to my school in front of everyone to 'go downtown' for a talk in their black and white car, like I was the one being busted."

It continues through the medical examination, the story being in the newspaper and a family being torn apart.

"I asked you to put an end to the abuse," the letter says at the end. "You put an end to my whole family. You've exchanged my private nightmare for a very public one."

jvanderkolk@ludingtondailynews.com
843-1122, ext. 309

Friday, June 24, 2005

Oakland Briefs

Detroit News staff reports and wire services

Pontiac

Mom's exam delayed in infant's death

A preliminary exam for a Pontiac woman accused of killing her infant daughter has been adjourned until 9 a.m. Sept. 22 in 50th District Court. Shontelle Cavanaugh, who family members said was suffering from postpartum depression, was charged in early June with open murder in connection with the death of her 9-month-old daughter. Police said the baby was found unresponsive, with red marks near her mouth, in the home that Cavanaugh shared with her mother on Marshbank.

Police: Man Poses As Reporter, Calls Little Leaguer

Newspaper Company May Consider Legal Action In Case

POSTED: 7:30 pm EDT June 23, 2005

UPDATED: 7:49 pm EDT June 23, 2005

DEXTER, Mich. -- A man was charged Wednesday for allegedly posing as a reporter to contact a Little Leaguer featured in a local newspaper.

Michael Roy Pierce, 27, was arraigned on charges of soliciting children on immoral purposes, according to the Washtenaw County Sheriff's Department.

Pierce apparently tracked down a phone number and called a 10-year-old boy after seeing the boy's name in a Little League baseball story in *The Dexter Leader*, sheriff's deputies said.

Authorities said Pierce posed as a reporter from the paper and lured the boy in with a friendly voice.

"(It was) alarming in the sense that specific things were asked and it got more graphical as the conversation went on," said the boy's father, who asked that the family's identity be protected. The father said he couldn't believe someone would target his son, Local 4 reported.

"(My son) is troubled. He's had some difficulty sleeping," the father said. "Obviously, this is really bothering him."

Washtenaw County Sheriff Daniel Minzey said the boy did the right thing by notifying his parents after the call.

"The good news out of all of this was the child did not decide to keep it to himself," Minzey said.

Officials at Heritage Newspapers, which owns *The Dexter Leader*, were not aware of the incident until contacted by Local 4.

The company president said the newspaper will run a story next week and will consider taking legal action against Pierce.

Pierce is being held at the Washtenaw County Jail on a \$150,000 bond. He's expected to return to court next month.

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Friday, June 24, 2005
The Detroit News
Letter

Wayne County makes progress on juveniles

In response to the June 12 story, "Juvenile system under fire," the true message on how the Wayne County Department of Children and Family Services addresses the critical needs of thousands of troubled youth throughout our communities is absent.

Statistics show that children residing in the poverty pockets of Wayne County, particularly Detroit children, are at greater risk than the kids of rural Mississippi. Far too often, the juvenile justice system is the only option available for these youth.

The Ficano administration inherited a juvenile justice program that was a first of its kind. The program was initiated in 1999 as a result of spiraling costs that threatened the county's solvency and ineffective programming for kids in trouble.

Our administration values every tax dollar the county receives. Our providers are held accountable for results. We are not focused on how many services are provided; we want to know how effective those services have been:

- Youth in custody has declined from 3,500 to 1,800.
- The arrest rate in Wayne County is down compared with other metropolitan counties.
- There are single-digit recidivism rates.
- The use of state training schools has declined to 40 youth a day from 800.
- One hundred secure detention beds have been closed.
- No juveniles have been placed outside of Michigan
- There has been a change in total expenses of only 0.5 percent over a five-year period.

The children in today's juvenile system have engaged in high-risk behaviors and present complex treatment needs. Many have a mental health diagnosis and require medication and therapeutic interventions. Often these needs can only be addressed in expensive residential placements.

Seventy percent of our costs are for institutional placements, although 60 percent of all services are delivered in home-based programs.

The Wayne County justice model is not complete. We are working on ways to eliminate redundant services as youth move between the state neglect program, community mental health and juvenile justice. Many abused children end up using drugs and develop serious emotional problems that lead to criminal behavior and commitment to justice programs. This pattern is well established. We are collaborating with the state and the mental health agency to end the historical segregation of services.

The emotional, behavioral and material needs we are addressing are a product of our communities, and we all share a societal responsibility to meet these challenges.

Arthur M. Carter
Director
Department of Children and Family Services
Wayne County
Detroit

Published June 24, 2005

Donations help VOA homeless shelter to stay open Winter funding still uncertain for Lansing site

By Kevin Grasha
Lansing State Journal

The Volunteers of America homeless day shelter will not shut its doors next week, but will stay open at least until Aug. 30, officials said Thursday.

The organization had said it would eliminate its New Hope Day Shelter program, which serves about 100 people a day, because of a 40 percent drop in revenue from car donations - its largest income source.

A federal tax law that took effect Jan. 1 gives people less incentive to donate cars to charities.

Since announcing the shelter's closing in early June, however, nearly \$56,000 in donations have come in, said Patrick Patterson, director of operations for Volunteers of America Michigan.

Patterson said the new donations will hold it over until the next challenge - getting through the cold months.

"It will buy us some time," Patterson said.

In addition to offering a safe place to stay on weekdays, the North Larch Street shelter provides such services as job training and substance abuse education.

Mason's Dart Foundation came through with \$25,000.

Jim Lammers, the foundation's vice president, said it saw a dire need and answered the call.

"It was quite a serious situation they were facing," he said.

About 20 percent of the organization's employees already have been laid off, from vice president to support staff, Patterson said.

"My assistant cook is running the development campaign," he said.

"We're just trying to stay alive."

In January, the organization received an anonymous \$100,000 donation, which allowed it to stay open until Thursday.

The center expects to receive enough federal grant money to cover expenses, starting July 1, 2006, but it's working to raise money to stay open until then.

Patterson recently returned from the Volunteers of America national convention in Washington, D.C., where he also met with many Michigan legislators and told them about the ramifications of the tax law changes.

He doesn't want to see that city's homelessness problem repeated here.

"We want to be a community that takes care of our people," he said.

How to help

- To make a financial donation, call the local Volunteers of America office at 484-4414, ext. 100.

- Contributions by credit card can be made through the national Web site, www.voa.org.

- To donate a vehicle, call (800) 552-1515.

Contact Kevin Grasha at 267-1347 or kgrasha@lsj.com.

Michigan Works awarded \$50,000 for job assistance

Dowagiac Daily News

Thursday, June 23, 2005 10:42 AM EDT

The Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Growth Wednesday announced an additional \$50,000 in Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funding to the Michigan Works! agency serving Berrien, Cass and Van Buren counties.

The grant will be used to provide employment-related services such as automobile purchases and transportation allowances for individuals participating in the Work First program.

"The additional funds will enable Michigan Works! to continue providing Work First participants with the employment supports they need to become self-sufficient," said Gov. Jennifer M. Granholm.

The goal of Work First is to assist Michigan's low-income citizens in obtaining jobs, or higher-paying jobs, thereby reducing or eliminating the need for public assistance.

Funding for Work First is provided by the State of Michigan and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and is administered by the Michigan Department of Labor & Economic Growth, Bureau of Workforce Programs.

The Department of Labor & Economic Growth (DLEG) is investing in Michigan's future by helping to create the jobs of today and tomorrow, ensuring that our children and adults have the skills these jobs demand, making Michigan a better place to do business, and training and placing those who need jobs now.

Habitat for Humanity brings Jimmy Carter to Michigan to build

Former president helps with projects in Benton Harbor and the Detroit area

PUBLISHED: June 23, 2005

By Gina Joseph
Macomb Daily Staff Writer

The sweet sound of gospel hymns can be heard on Sundays at St. Elizabeth Holiness Church of God and there's the odd squeal of car tires, but mostly the neighborhood along Magnolia Street in Detroit is quiet. Dead quiet.

"This is beautiful," said Elizabeth Pollard, referring to the noise and commotion created by Habitat for Humanity International's Jimmy Carter Work Project 2005. The weeklong building blitz is held annually in the United States and other parts of the world. Detroit and Benton Harbor were chosen as host cities this year. "I hope this means I'm going to have some good neighbors moving in."

Pollard is the pastor at St. Elizabeth and has lived in its upstairs suite since 1967. She's seen her neighborhood at its best, and its worst. Watching from a chair in front of her home wearing a sundress and her silver hair done up in corn rows, she was seeing her neighborhood at its best again, alive with new home construction and people.

"Have you seen Jimmy Carter?" she asked, while looking up and down the street. "He is supposed to be here, somewhere."

The former U.S. President and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Jimmy Carter, 80, and his wife, Rosalyn, arrived in Michigan on Saturday to kick off the event. Their presence in the state created a wave of thundering hammers and zipping saws that has played for four days -- not only in Pollard's neighborhood but also, all across Michigan.

Wednesday, for a brief moment, the noise stopped.

Homeowners

"There's not much difference between a homeowner and a governor," said Carter, who arrived in Pollard's neighborhood ready to go to work, wearing blue jeans supported by a leather belt with a silver horseshoe belt buckle with the initials J.C. in its middle, white running shoes and Habitat cap. "We all want a better life for our children and a better prospect for the future."

Carter said the answer to providing affordable housing in Michigan, and for that matter throughout the world, is not to abandon a community, but where possible to 'rebuild' a community.

A report by Habitat for Humanity Michigan stated that approximately 500,000 households earn less than 50 percent of their county's median income, making decent, affordable housing hard to find. Of these households, almost 75 percent, or nearly 375,000 families, use more than half their income for housing, leaving little money for food, clothing, healthcare, transportation and other necessities."

Carter told the crowd of volunteers, sponsors, activists and journalists gathered in Detroit that Habitat for Humanity can't build enough homes to solve the building crisis in the world but it can inspire others to help with the solution.

Carter inspired Michigan's Governor Jennifer Granholm.

She was very much a part of the building project, visiting homes and helping with the construction in Benton Harbor. Sitting next to Carter wearing a Detroit Pistons T-shirt she talked about the importance of the sponsors such as Whirlpool Corp., Masco Corp., Dow Chemical Company, Lowe's, Great Lakes Capital Fund and the Michigan State Housing, that support such building projects. Then she smiled and added that 650 state employees took this entire week off to help build homes. Never before, in the history of Habitat for Humanity has every member of a state's congressional delegation pledged to take part in the building effort.

Proud of this fact was U.S. Senator Debbie Stabenow, D-Mich.

"I love Habitat for Humanity," Stabenow said. "I've been involved with it for 20 years. I'm pretty good at swinging a hammer. I've also learned how to put up siding and drywall. Just don't put me on a roof. I'm not great with heights."

As a result of the statewide support for the Jimmy Carter Work Project 2005, Michigan will have 230 new homes.

"We have never seen a state or country come together as complete as this state has this past week," Carter said. "So there's something special about Michigan."

With that said Carter went back to work.

He and Rosalyn worked on a home along with several of their children. Of the grand total, to be finished by Friday, 31 were built in Pollard's neighborhood and 24 in Benton Harbor.

Today, the former president and his wife are off to Ontario, where they will work alongside Canadians on one of three duplexes being built by the Windsor chapter of Habitat for Humanity. The new homes are part of a quaint little community that has sprung up along Bruce Street.

"We built those last year," said Tammy Moore, Habitat for Humanity volunteer and board of directors member, while pointing to a row of foursquare-style homes with beige siding across the street from the Habitat project.

"Personally, I was too young to know what Carter was like as president but his devotion and drive for the cause of Habitat fuels the energy for my wanting to volunteer, as well as local and international commitments. This build here is a good example. It brings together Canada and the United States as a North American community."

The remaining homes will be completed by the 60-plus Michigan Habitat affiliates including Macomb County's chapter of Habitat for Humanity, which has three homes in Clinton Township presently under construction. Among Macomb County's newest homeowners are: Sophia Waters, a single mother with two daughters; Jackie Pointer, a single mother with one son; and Andrea Hodges, also a single mother with one son.

"My house is awesome," said Sophia Waters. The best part being it's permanent.

"We don't have to worry about moving here or there. I will grow old in this house. My kids might go to college, but now they will have a place to come home to."

The Oakley Street house was part of a Habitat for Humanity Women Build that included Waters. She helped with the painting, drywall and siding, but she is most proud of her work in the kitchen where she and the other ladies on the Habitat team installed a beautiful ceramic tile floor.

"I could live in my kitchen alone," said Waters, a press operator and hi-lo driver for Manufacture Products in Warren. "It's awesome."

Unexpected talent

Andrea Hodges was not part of an "all women build," but, like all future Habitat homeowners, helped in its construction.

"I've done the painting, I worked on the siding and I helped put in the windows. I would've never known I had that kind of talent," said Hodges, a nursing assistant at Martha T. Berry in Mount Clemens. For the past year Hodges has rented an apartment, but after attending a Habitat for Humanity information meeting decided it was time to start paying on her own home instead of one owned by someone else.

"In order to qualify for the program, families must have an income that's 50 percent below the median income for the surrounding area," said Daniel Wiiki, executive director of the Macomb County chapter of Habitat. Participants must also contribute 250 hours of "sweat equity" toward the building of their homes. Once completed, the owner purchases the home at cost for a considerable savings.

"We sell the home with no interest," Wiiki said. "The family can be in the home with payments as little as \$400 a month."

Patriarch visits

Watching everything unfold in Detroit was the Catholics and Supreme Patriarch of All Armenians, His Holiness Karekin II. Wearing a long black robe and a Masco baseball cap His Holiness -- equivalent in Armenia to a pope -- walked the grounds asking questions. Then, to the surprise of Zara Tonapetyan of Yerevan, Armenia, who is the resource development coordinator of Habitat for Humanity Armenia, he went to work painting a room in one of the houses.

"To see the Patriarch building and actually painting the walls. It's lots of enthusiasm,"

Tonapetyan said. "Have you ever seen a pope building a home? It is inspiring."

Tonapetyan said 40 percent of the population in Armenia is without heat, water and basic living conditions. That's why she and the group stopped in Detroit. They have built 122 homes in different areas of the country but more is needed.

"We have earthquake in 1988," Tonapetyan said. "It destroyed two cities and now these people are homeless. Then there was the Nagorno-Karabagh conflict. It brought 100,000 refugees to Armenia."

Karekin visited Michigan to make people, more importantly the Diaspora population, aware of the situation. Diaspora refers to Armenians who live outside of the country.

"We are very glad to be here to see how the volunteers with joy are building houses and how they support cities," said Karekin. "People from Armenia and other nations are coming together, building the houses and friendships, which is a blessing for the families and the volunteers."

When all the work is done everyone will rejoice and to celebrate the fruits of their labor a traditional dedication ceremony will be held. The keys to the homes will be given to the family. That's when it all hits home for Ken Bensen, president for Habitat for Humanity Michigan, who has been with the ecumenical Christian ministry based in Americus, Ga., for 20 years.

"The best part for me is knowing that on Friday there will be 238 families who will have decent and affordable housing and in addition to that, there will be volunteers who will have sore muscles and bruises but their hearts will be filled with joy," said Bensen.

Bush official touts Healthy Marriage Initiative

Speaker at U-M's 'Poverty in America' workshop says program aims to educate couples

Friday, June 24, 2005 BY JO COLLINS MATHIS News Staff Reporter

"Work is," said Wade Horn, assistant secretary for children and families at the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. "But by combining work with the promotion of healthy marriages, poverty reduction can be enhanced."

Speaking during U-M's week-long "Poverty in America" workshop, Horn explained how marriage education services for low-income couples and individuals is a promising strategy not only for strengthening families and increasing the well-being of children, but for playing a role in the administration's push to help Americans escape poverty through work.

He said his research shows that healthy marriages help reduce poverty in several ways: Marriage is more stable than cohabitation. Children need stability in family life, something marriage is significantly more likely to achieve than cohabitation.

Researchers find a consistent earnings boost for men who marry.

Extended families are more likely to invest their resources in married-couple families than in cohabiting families.

Horn said he oversees 65 different social programs at an annual cost of nearly \$47 billion, and that the need for each of these programs - child welfare, child support enforcement, programs for runaway youth, anti-poverty programs - is either created or exacerbated by the breakup of families.

Horn's office is responsible for programs that promote the social and economic well-being of families, including Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), foster care, adoption assistance, Head Start and child care.

President George W. Bush announced his proposal to spend federal funds on marriage education and promotion in 2002 as part of his administration's proposal for welfare reform. It was approved by the U.S. House of Representatives and the Senate Finance Committee in 2003.

If given final Senate approval, the legislation would set up a \$100 million annual fund primarily to support healthy marriage research and technical assistance; and a separate \$100 million competitive matching grant program so states, local governments, and faith-based organizations could initiate new marriage programs and strengthen existing ones.

In both cases, the emphasis would be on evaluating innovations such as public education campaigns; pre-marital education programs; marriage enrichment programs; and outreach to troubled marriages.

Horn reviewed research that documents the effectiveness of marriage education and discussed the achievements of welfare reform.

In the question-answer segment following the 55-minute speech, U-M student Lloyd Grieger asked Horn for a definition of "healthy marriage" and asked how families led by same-sex couples fit into the HMI.

"I come from the perspective that health is not the absence of unhealth," Horn said, noting that researchers have found that healthy relationships are those in which each person believes he or she has an obligation and responsibility to nurture, support and encourage the other.

He said he wasn't there to argue the same-sex couple issue.

"In many ways, it's irrelevant to my work in that as a federal official, I'm governed by federal statute," he said, noting that The Defense of Marriage Act defines marriage as a union between one man and one woman. "As a federal official, I don't have the luxury of picking which statutes I should obey."

But he said he would treat the children of same-sex couples like any other.

"If a same-sex couple walked into my office and said, 'Gee, we need help,' you know what my answer would be? Welcome. And I think that's the way we should always respond when it comes to the needs of children."

Rebecca Blank, dean of the Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy, supports the HMI, and especially Horn's emphasis on not just running programs, but evaluating them. She said the devil is always in the details in how these programs get implemented.

"The concern is that states have to do this right," she said. "Up to a point, the federal government can be involved in that. But it's up to the states and up to the people involved in those programs. We as citizens have a role in that as well. You can run these programs and they can be good. Or you can run these programs and they can be punitive and done in all sorts of ways none of us would like. I think Wade is serious when he talks about doing them in a high-quality level, in ways we'd all support."

Asked what is next politically for HMI, Horn said it's likely TANF will be reauthorized this year.

"I'm at least reasonably optimistic we'll see the Healthy Marriage Initiative, which is a piece of TANF authorization enacted by the end of this fiscal year," he said. "In the meantime, we continue to fund a number of demonstration projects and a variety of other programs because we're still learning the best way to do this that maximizes the benefits to the couple, but also benefits to the child."

Horn's speech was sponsored by the National Poverty Center at the Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy.

Jo Mathis can be reached at jmathis@annarbornews.com or (734) 994-6849.

Mentally ill hurt by gap in state law Michigan tried to order care for severe cases, but judges and families say the rule can't be enforced.

By Gregg Krupa / The Detroit News
June 24, 2005

What was to be a major reform of mental health care in Michigan is off to a stumbling start statewide, leaving the families of hundreds of people with serious mental illnesses in legal limbo as they search for court-ordered care for their loved ones.

Kevin's Law was intended to provide mandatory mental health care for some severe cases, before the mentally ill became a threat to themselves or others. But, two months after it was enacted, some judges say they cannot enforce the law because it provides no means of making people who are mentally ill appear in court, and because the Legislature provided no financing. Those judges -- not all agree -- say the law needs to be rewritten.

"I don't even know why I try to do some of these things," says Marilyn Munroe, 73, of Belleville, who for years has sought proper treatment for her son, Lee. The 36-year-old man has bipolar disorder and alcohol abuse problems, and has been arrested three times for allegedly assaulting his mother.

"It's just all frustration," Munroe said.

Kevin's Law allows individuals to request court-ordered care for people with serious mental illnesses who have been arrested or received care in the past. Munroe said she was ultimately told by the Wayne County Probate Court that she could not use Kevin's Law, because Lee refused to appear before a judge.

"That defeats the whole purpose of Kevin's Law," Munroe said. "My son is so sick he won't even take his medication. How am I supposed to get him down to court?"

Named for Kevin Heisinger of Chicago, who was killed in a Kalamazoo bus station in 2000 by a mentally ill man, Kevin's Law authorizes probate courts to compel outpatient care. Previously, care could be ordered only if the person was demonstrably a threat to himself or others.

The law was recommended by the Michigan Mental Health Commission, appointed by Gov. Jennifer Granholm, as integral to reforming mental health care.

About 60,000 people in Michigan have serious mental illnesses. Under Kevin's Law, only the people with the most extreme cases, perhaps 500 to 1,000 statewide, could be ordered by courts to receive care -- if the law worked as envisioned.

"The way it is set up, it's basically almost impossible to implement," said Chief Probate Judge Milton Mack Jr. of Wayne County. Mack says the Constitution requires the mentally ill to be given an opportunity to respond in court.

"And the fact is, if a person suffering with mental illness is willing to come to court to testify, they probably don't need the order," Mack said.

To use Kevin's Law
Family, relatives, friends,
social workers, health care
providers, educators, police,
judges and others are all
eligible to petition for court-
ordered outpatient treatment
under Kevin's Law.

Contact a Probate Court
clerk's office or a judge's
office in your county to
obtain forms and schedule a
hearing.

Contact the community
mental health agency in your
area for advice and
suggestions about how to
proceed.

Until complications with
Kevin's Law in Michigan are
alleviated, it may be wise to
consult a private lawyer or, if
income is an issue, to seek
free legal advice.

While Michigan provided no financing to enforce the law, the New York Legislature appropriated \$7.9 million when it enacted a similar reform.

Extra money would be needed to pay medical experts, help health agencies to comply with the order and pay for someone to escort the mentally ill to court.

"It's not as smooth of an implementation as we wanted to see," said Dr. Michelle Reid, the medical director of the Detroit-Wayne County Community Mental Health Agency. "That makes it not as effective for all the people we thought could be helped by the law."

Mother worries about son

When she read about Kevin's Law in the newspaper, Marilyn Munroe said she felt assured that help was on the way.

But since its enactment March 30, Munroe said that she was told twice that officials in Wayne County Probate Court were not ready to enforce it. When she asked for forms to fill out, Munroe said a court worker directed her to law books and helped her find the statute so she could make a copy.

Munroe says she struck out on her third attempt last month when court officials told her Lee had to appear before a judge.

She says police told her to put her son out of their home, and she is now worried that they will not respond if he becomes violent again. "I'm just waiting for something else to happen," she said. "The problem with Kevin's Law is that they tried to fix the whole mental health system with one act, and it did not work," said Saginaw County Probate Judge Patrick McGraw.

But some advocates, mental health workers and court officials disagree. They say that judges can compel appearances under Kevin's Law, and that a lack of financing should not bar implementation.

"I think there is a lot of confusion and misunderstanding out there," said Mark Reinstein, president of the Mental Health Association in Michigan.

Oakland provides help

The use of Kevin's Law varies widely from county to county. Mental health officials in Oakland County appear to have seized the initiative.

In probate court in Pontiac, a sign directs petitioners to call an official at Common Ground Sanctuary if they have trouble obtaining or filling out the forms required by the law.

If the subject of a petition wants to appear in court, the county dispatches a mobile crisis team to bring him or her in.

Still, some relatives of the mentally ill continue to struggle.

Jacqueline Martin of Detroit tried to find care for her son, who she said has been exhibiting evidence of mental illness and has been arrested for breaking and entering into her home and assaulting her. Martin said she discussed his condition with prosecutors, who asked her what she would like to see happen.

"I told them I would like to see him get a medical evaluation," she said. "They never said anything about Kevin's Law. They just told me I was another mother who did not want to see her son go to jail."

Charities feel pain as car donations skid

By Francis X. Donnelly / The Detroit News
June 24, 2005

One Metro Detroit charity was forced to move its offices into a doublewide trailer. Another lost its headquarters to foreclosure. But those aren't the darkest clouds looming over charities that depend on donations of used cars.

Volunteers of America and Motor City Blight Busters, among others, have slashed services, including closing a homeless shelter and cutting back on soup kitchens and low-income housing.

It's because of a new law that gutted the financial incentive of donating one's car to charity, which had been a popular tax write-off. Since the change went into effect Jan. 1, the number of vehicles donated in Metro Detroit has dropped 40 percent, according to six groups that rely on the gifts.

"It was a big blow to us," said Norman Yatooma, chairman of Charity Motors, a Detroit nonprofit. "It has a devastating impact on Charity Motors and all the charities we work with."

Under the law, taxpayers no longer can deduct the fair market value of the donated car from their taxes. Rather, they're limited to the price the vehicle fetched when it was sold by the charity.

Congress enacted the change after studies found that taxpayers were abusing the tax break by taking deductions far above the actual selling prices. A review of 54 donations in 2003 found that charities received 5 percent of the amount donors claimed as deductions, according to the General Accounting Office.

In a clarification earlier this month, the federal Treasury Department said residents could continue to deduct the fair-market value if they donate their car to a charity that resells it to the poor. In southeast Michigan, Charity Motors is one of the few charities that do so.

To qualify as low income, Michigan residents can show their state Bridge Card, which is issued by the Family Independence Agency for food or financial assistance.

Volunteers of America Michigan is preparing to close a homeless day shelter in Lansing on July 1, president Alex Brodrick said. The shelter, which provides food, job training and other services to 100 people a day, was supposed to close in January but an anonymous \$100,000 donation kept it open.

The VOA has closed one of its two car auction lots, fired 20 of its 95 workers and moved its headquarters from a two-story brick building to a trailer on a car lot in Pontiac. Its budget will drop from \$9 million to \$7 million in the next fiscal year, which begins July 1.

"It's not a happy day," Brodrick said. "It's hit us pretty hard."

The drop in car donations comes at a vulnerable time for charities, they said. Their other funding sources, such as contributions from residents and businesses, also are low because of the sputtering Michigan economy.

How to donate

Donating a car to charity

Contact the charity online or in person, giving information about the car, such as age and mileage. You can either drive the car into the charity's lot or have it towed and must give registration to charity. Once the car is resold, the charity will return a receipt with the price that the car sold for. You may deduct only that amount from itemized taxes.

What the write-off is worth

If the charity sells your car for \$2,000 and you are in the 25 percent tax bracket, the donation will net you a \$500 savings on your income tax bill. If you're in the 15 percent bracket, you'll pocket \$300 more than if you hadn't donated the car.

The limping economy not only dries up their sources of income, but also creates more people who need their help, said John George, executive director of Motor City Blight Busters.

"We're trying to come out of a tailspin," he said. "We're going from one grant, one sale, one donation to another. We need a guardian angel to step forward."

Blight Busters, which renovates or demolishes substandard housing in Detroit, has cut production in half, now building just two homes a year. Its budget has dropped from \$1 million in '01 to \$500,000 this year.

The group's four workers sometimes go without pay and the organization has fallen \$50,000 into debt, George said. It's trying to re-buy the building housing its headquarters after it was foreclosed on Christmas Eve.

Detroit resident Wiltrice Rogers had hoped that Blight Busters would have torn down the crack house next door to her west-side home by now. But its lack of money has slowed the progress. Relief finally arrived earlier this year when Blight Busters boarded up the home and recently began tearing down its garage and porch. It's waiting for a permit from the city to raze the main structure.

"I'm truly grateful for them stepping in," said Rogers, 37. "It'll increase my property value and make me feel safe while going into my home."

Besides getting fewer cars this year, charities said they also seem to be receiving ones in poorer condition, including ones that barely run. The possible culprit is the economy, they said. With people less secure of their finances, they may be hanging onto their vehicles longer than they usually do. The clunkers don't give the charities much of a chance to make money, said George Fink, general manager of Mother Waddles, a Detroit charity.

As for the number of cars donated, Mother Waddles has seen the number fall 46 percent this year, he said. The yearly revenue from donations will probably drop from \$750,000 to half that next year.

Because of the drop in funding, the charity will reduce its feeding of the poor from weekly to biweekly at its car lot in Detroit, Fink said. It costs up to \$3,000 to distribute the 80 to 100 food baskets containing chicken and fruit.

At the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, another Detroit charity, the amount of money raised from car donations will probably drop from \$400,000 a year to \$300,000, executive director Bill Brazier said.

That means the group will dispense many fewer vouchers that the poor use for rent and transportation. "The pie isn't getting any larger," Brazier said. "We'll have to go into our reserves to cover the vouchers."

You can reach Francis X. Donnelly at (313) 223-4186 or fdonnelly@detnews.com.

Supreme Court overturns state appeals law Poor qualify for lawyer even if they chose to plead guilty

Staff and Wire Reports

WASHINGTON - The U.S. Supreme Court on Thursday struck down a Michigan law that barred state-paid legal help for poor defendants who plead guilty but then want to appeal.

The decision means prosecutors' offices statewide are in for a change, though it's still uncertain what the full impact will be, said Susan LeDuc, chief of Ingham County's Appellate Division.

"In a way, we are back to where we were, and that probably means more work for our office," LeDuc said. "It does have budgetary implications for all of us taxpayers because there will be more attorneys appointed."

The one-of-a-kind law had been challenged by Antonio Dwayne Halbert, who pleaded no contest in 2001 to two child molestation charges and received up to 30 years in prison.

He wanted a state-appointed lawyer to help him contest the way his sentence was calculated.

But Michigan's law, approved by voters in 1994, barred automatic appeals for defendants who plead guilty or no contest. There are some exceptions, including if a prosecutor seeks an appeal. Defendants may ask the state Court of Appeals for permission to appeal, but that request is seldom granted.

Local court-appointed attorneys agreed with Thursday's decision.

"This pretty much creates an equal playing field for poor defendants and rich defendants," said George Zulakis, who represents defendants in Ingham, Eaton and Clinton counties.

Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, writing the 6-3 decision, said that Halbert had a constitutional right to a lawyer.

"Navigating the appellate process without a lawyer's assistance is a perilous endeavor for a layperson, and well beyond the competence of individuals, like Halbert, who have little education, learning disabilities, and mental impairments," she wrote.

In a dissent, Justice Clarence Thomas, joined by Chief Justice William Rehnquist and Justice Antonin Scalia, said, "Today the court confers on defendants convicted by plea a right nowhere to be found in the Constitution ..."

Thomas said that money would be better spent helping defendants who pleaded not guilty and "whose claims are, on average, likely more meritorious."

Halbert, who was accused of sexually assaulting his stepdaughter and another girl, now must be provided with a lawyer for his appeal.

Staff writer Tracy Burton contributed to this report.

Battle Creek Enquirer

June 24, 2005

Letters to the editor

Stop free care for those here illegally

I encourage everyone to contact our elected state representatives and *demand* to *stop* providing free education, food and medical care to people who disrespect our laws and way of life, by living in the USA illegally.

Plyler v. Doe Supreme Court ruling affirms that *legal* residents *must* be afforded an education.

The problem is the definition of the word *legal* is presently defined only as a person who lives in a district.

Several school districts around the state are *broke*. We, Michigan, *cannot* afford to continue to give *free* education and medical care to just anyone that turns up in our *great* state. Our lack of laws or constitutional amendments will leave our state bankrupt.

Michigan is now the new No. 1 state in the nation's unemployment. The Detroit Free Press said one in every 151 persons in Michigan is here illegally, approximately 65,817, or 3,395 *more* than *everyone* in St. Joseph County. The *free* medical care, education and food we are handing out continues to break taxpayers' backs - of course, the ones lucky enough to have a job.

We are importing felons and terrorists, feeding them, providing quality medical care and one of the best educations that money can buy.

How long can we continue to advertise our *free* giveaways to *any legal* resident?

Please, encourage our elected state Representatives to define *legal* resident, or make a constitutional amendment.

Please ensure our tax dollars are spent only on the *real* legal residents of Michigan, not just anyone that steals our freedoms

John Jolin

Battle Creek

Michigan Report
June 23, 2005

HOUSE OKS HUMAN RESOURCE CONSOLIDATION

A bill to reorganize and possibly reduce human resources within the executive branch passed the House on Thursday on a nearly party-line vote.

The bill (HB 4148, passed 57-52) is similar to legislation vetoed in the 2003-04 legislative session by Governor Jennifer Granholm, whose administration has said changes put in place by both her and former Governor John Engler are saving the state money on its human resource operations.

MIRS

June 23, 2005

Human Resource Consolidation Bill Moves, Again

Today, on a party line 57-52 vote, the House passed HB 4148, a bill that would consolidate the various state department human resources (HR) divisions into one division.

Last session, virtually the same measure moved through the Legislature as HB 5190 and was ultimately vetoed by Gov. Jennifer **GRANHOLM**.

The bill's sponsor, Rep. Phil **LaJOY** (R-Canton), whose background is in human resources, argued that the consolidation would save taxpayer dollars by increasing efficiency and reducing redundancies.

The legislation would create a director of personnel operation to oversee state human resources. The consolidation would not affect the offices of the executive branch, the judiciary, Secretary of State, Attorney General or the Legislature.

Democrats have argued that Granholm is already taking steps to streamline state government, including consolidation where it is deemed to be appropriate. They basically maintain that a governor should have the ability to reorganize as she sees fit and that one plan or vision of how to organize is more likely to succeed than two competing plans, even if both plans are good.

LaJoy's plan was hampered rhetorically last session when Nancy **McKEAGUE**, the Michigan Chamber Human Resource expert at the time, didn't whole-heartedly endorse it (See Oct. 22, 2003 edition).